SOME ELIZABETHAN BOOK SALES.

RECORDS of several law suits in which Elizabethan booksellers were concerned have recently been found in the Plea Rolls. They relate to the sale and purchase of books, of which the titles and prices are set out, and they are worth a few moments' attention, as they take us into the shops or warehouses of certain London men, of whom little has been known, and introduce us to their customers, some of them provincial booksellers never previously heard of. The book-lists, moreover, give us an insight into the current literature of the day and its saleability, and raise some interesting problems. Finally, book-prices are always fascinating, and here we have at least two lists in which the prices of individual books are given, and the fact that while one of these records trade prices, as between bookseller and bookseller, the other gives the retail price to a private customer, and holds out hopes of getting very near to the secrets of the Elizabethan book-trade.

I. The first of these actions was brought in Michaelmas term, 1571, by Abraham Veale, the printer and bookseller, who carried on business at the sign of the 'Lamb,' in St. Paul's Churchyard, against a hitherto unknown bookseller in Norwich, named Robert Scott. The action was to recover a sum of twelve pounds odd, the balance of an

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account for books supplied to Scott at various times between the 12th July, 1568, and the 4th November, 1570.

All Scott's purchases are set out in full, and cover two closely-written membranes of the roll, but unfortunately only the sum totals of each parcel of books supplied is given, so that the value of this list lies chiefly in the insight which it gives into the class of books called for by the reading public of a large provincial city in the second half of the sixteenth century, as shewn by their titles and the number of copies that Scott found it necessary to stock, and the quickness with which new books were asked for in the provinces.

Norwich was at that time one of the most populous and thriving cities in England, in close touch with the continent of Europe, and it was also the centre of a great ecclesiastical diocese, and the clergy, we may be sure, were amongst Scott's best customers. Scott's purchases may be divided into six classes: (1) Service books and devotional works, (2) educational works including editions of classical authors, (3) ballads, (4) almanacks, (5) miscellaneous books, and (6) binding materials. On the average he replenished his stock twice a month, but towards the end of the period covered by these accounts less frequently, probably because Veale refused to let him have any more until the account was paid.

The theological books need not detain us long. On one occasion Scott bought a large bible of Jugge's edition, and on another a New Testament from the same press. Psalms and psalters figure

largely in these accounts, and were distinguished as being some in pica and others in English letter. Communion books with the psalms bound with them are also frequently mentioned. Of primers also Scott bought large numbers. They are described as both large and small, and he ordered at least a dozen copies of either one or the other every time he sent to London. Probably they were all variations of a book first published by William Seres in 1560, 'A Primer or Boke of private praier nedefull to be used of all faythfull Christians. Whyche book is to be vused of all our louyng subiectes.' A reprint of this, including the Catechism (as did the 1560 edition, though without special mention of it) is recorded by Dibdin as issued by Seres in 1566.

Judging from the number of times it appears in Scott's list, one of the most popular devotional books of the day was the 'Treasure of Gladnes,' which is described as a little book. This had been first published by Charlewood in 1563, with the title 'This Booke is called the Treasure of Gladnesse and seemeth by the Copie, beyng a very little Manuell, and written in velam, to be made aboue C.C. yeres past at the least. Whereby it appeareth howe God in olde tyme, and not of late only, hath been truely confessed and honoured.' Its compiler is unknown. Scott ordered two copies of the book on the 12th July, 1568, two more on the 4th November, four copies on the 20th of the same month, four more copies in December, three copies in the following May, and eight more in December, 1569. No other devotional work

figures so frequently in his accounts, but its popularity may have been partly due to the fact that it is said to have been illustrated 'cum vinettés,' though the extant copies are not so embellished. Among other books of this nature for which Scott was asked were 'The Pomander of Prayers,' Becon's well-known work, which continued in print as late as this, 'The Castle of Christianitie,' by Lewis Evans, and the same author's less familiar work, 'De Eucharistia.'

Books of various kinds used for teaching boys Latin figure largely in Robert Scott's orders. Cicero, Ovid, Terence and Virgil, as well as Cato and Mantuan are all represented, the edition of Terence desired being always specified as the Antwerp impression, from which we may conclude that it was either the best or the cheapest. There are entries also of Greek grammars, of a Greek and Latin edition of the 'Fables of Æsop,' and of various dialogue books.

Ballads are referred to in these accounts as 'Odes called ballads,' and Scott bought hundreds of them, but unfortunately, except in two instances, none of the titles are given. The exceptions are, however, notable. In his order of the 2nd September, 1569, he specially asks for four dozen other ballads of Edmund Bonner. This famous or infamous churchman was then on his death bed. He was cordially hated by the great mass of the people, and these ballads commemorated some of the chief acts of his life. He died on the 5th September. In the following year Scott also bought twenty-five ballads about the Rebellion which had

broken out in the North. Several ballads on this subject are preserved in the collection which came to the British Museum as part of the Huth Bequest in 1911.

Scott's requirements in the way of almanacs were always large, and amongst those specially mentioned were Erra Pater, The Christian Almanack, and almanacs 'cum assaribus vocatis Pegges ejusdem annex.,' as to which Mr. Bosanquet's forthcoming monograph for the Bibliographical Society will doubtless enlighten us.

It is in the miscellaneous section that Scott's list is most interesting. Here are a few titles taken at random: two copies of the 'Chronicles of England,'¹ abridged by Stow, two books called 'Inquisitions of Spayne,'² two books called 'Arbors of Amytie,'³ two books called 'Songs and Sonnettes,'⁴ two books called 'The modest meane to marriage,'⁵ two books called 'The Florentyne

¹ Marsh printed an edition continued to November, 1567. I have, as a matter of curiosity, identified all the books mentioned by Mr. Plomer from this list, and it is interesting to see how easily they can be traced.—A. W. P.

² 'A Discovery and playne Declaration of sundry subtile practices of the Holy Inquisition of Spayne. Set forth in Latine by Reginaldus Gonsalvius Montanus and newly translated.' Editions by John Day in 1568 and 1569.

³ 'The Arbor of Amitie wherein is comprised pleasant Poems and pretie Poesies set foorth by Thomas Howell gentleman. Anno 1568.' Printed by Henry Denham.

Not Tottell's well-known Miscellany, though it was reprinted in 1567, but 'a booke entituled Songes and Sonnettes by Thomas Bryce,' licensed to Henry Bynneman in 1568.

⁵ A modest Means to Mariage, translated into English by N[icholas] L[eigh] Anno 1568. By Erasmus. Entry from Hazlitt's 'Handbook.'

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cowper,'¹ six books of 'Gargantua,'² two books called 'Scoggins iests,'³ six interludes between the 'Devil and the charcoal burner,'⁴ four copies of the 'Travels of John Hawkyngs,'⁵ six pictures of monstrous fishes,⁶ six pictures of Nobody,⁷ six books called the 'Diriges of Bonnor,'⁸ and two books called the 'Seven Sorrows of Women.'⁹

¹ 'The Fearfull Fancies of the Florentine Couper, Written in Toscare by John Baptista Gelli, one of the free Studie of Florence, and for recreation translated into English by W. Barker. Anno 1568.' Printed by Bynneman.

² Probably, from the number ordered, a chap-book. A book with this name was licensed to Danter in 1594.

³ 'The geystes of Skoggon' were licensed to Thomas Colwell in 1565-6. The earliest edition known seems to be one of 1613.

⁴ 'An Enterlude intituled Like wil to like quod the Deuel to the Collier,' printed by John Allde 1568.

⁵ 'A true declaration of the troublesome voyadge of M. John Haukins to the parties of Guynea and the West Indies in 1567 and 1568. Printed by Purfoote for Harrison, 1569.

⁶ 'A moste true and marueilous straunge wonder, of xvii. monstrous fishes, taken in Suffolke, at Downam brydge, within a myle of Ipswicke. 1568.' Printed by T. Colwell. See 'Ballads and Broad-sides chiefly of the Elizabethan period.' Edited by H. L. Collmann, Roxburghe Club. 1912. No. 52.

⁷ In 1568-9 a licence was granted to Hugh Singleton for printing 'the retorne of olde well spoken No Body.' A poem on 'The Wellspoken Nobody,' with a German woodcut, was printed as a broadside early enough to be attributed to Wynkyn de Worde (see Collection W. L. Schreiber, sale-catalogue, 1909, no. 102), and late enough for Hazlitt (Collections, I. 307) to suggest '1600' as its date. This latter copy is reproduced as no. 91 in the Roxburghe Club volume quoted in the preceding note.

⁸ 'A Commemoration or Dirige of Bastarde Edmonde Boner, alias Sauage, usurped Bishoppe of London. Compiled by Lemeke Auale.' Printed by P. O. 1569.

⁹ 'The seuen sorowes that women haue when theyr husbendes be deade. Compyled by Robert Copland.' Printed by William Copland, dated in B.M. Catalogue [1560?], but shown by this reference to be more probably [1568-9].

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In these proceedings Scott is described as a bookbinder, and amongst his purchases from Veale there is frequent mention of pasteboards, clasps for books, and on one occasion twenty-four copper plates.

II. The next case of interest is that brought by Francis Coldock, another bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, against a bookseller in Taunton named John Herne. It was heard in Easter term, 1576, and, like the preceding suit, was for books supplied to Herne in the way of trade, with the additional merit that it gives the price of each book.

Taking the various classes of books in the same order as in the case of Scott, under the head of service books, Herne bought Genevan testaments for three shillings each, Communion books ranged in price from seven shillings down to two shillings, Catechisms averaged eleven pence a piece, but in one instance he bought five dozen copies for three shillings, and in another, four copies of Nowell's Catechism for two shillings, or sixpence each.

The wholesale prices of various devotional works are worth recording for the purposes of comparison. A copy of Becon's 'Governance of Virtue' is given as one and sixpence, 'The Pomander of Prayer,' one shilling, 'The Flower of Godly Prayers,' one shilling and fourpence, and 'Right Godly Rules,' another popular manual, also one and fourpence. On the other hand a copy of 'Augustine De civitate dei' cost the bookseller twelve shillings.

With the exception of Tully's offices, with the commentary of Wolfe, for which Hearne paid eight shillings, all the educational works supplied to him

were cheap, four copies of Ovid's *Epistles* being priced at eightpence each, a copy of Aristotle's '*Organum*' at one shilling and eightpence, and the '*Physics and Logic*' at two shillings. Record's '*Arithmetic*' is priced at tenpence, and a copy of Bede's '*History*' at one shilling and twopence. Dictionaries and Commentaries were much more expensive, a copy of Cooper's '*Dictionary*' being priced at twenty-three shillings.

A feature of Hearne's list, not found in that of Scott, is in the matter of small law books, of which he stocked a considerable number. The wholesale price of these was generally a shilling. Neither ballads nor almanacs are asked for, but this may be accounted for by assuming that he had already supplied himself with all he wanted, but there are three entries relating to what were evidently chap-books. The first is briefly entered as '*Jhon Manidulet*,' which may be hazarded to stand for John Maundeville, three copies being supplied to him at sixpence each. The next work is called '*Patient*,' perhaps Patient Grizell is meant, its price being threepence, and the third is entered as '*Tom Tylers*,' four copies of which he bought for sixpence.

In the class of miscellaneous literature, two copies of Gascoigne's '*Posies*' cost Hearne five shillings and fourpence, four copies of the '*Theatre for Wordlings*,' two shillings. A work not identified is Le Strange's '*Novellos*,' evidently something very small, as eight copies only cost one shilling and two pence, or one penny and three farthings each. '*Arnoldum and Lucenda*' is evidently

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Desainlien's 'Pretty . . . Historie of Arnalt and Lucenda, translated from the Italian, with certen Rules and Dialogues set foorth for the learner of th' Italian Song . . . by C. Hollyband,' and first printed by Thomas Purfoote in 1575. The whole-sale price of this book was sixpence. One copy of 'David Lindsay' is a tantalizing entry. Could it have been the recently issued 'Dialogue between Experience and a Courtier,' which had also been printed by Thomas Purfoote. Coldocke's price for it was one shilling and fourpence. Two entries, 'The Pathways' and 'The Conways,' each priced at ninepence, are insoluble puzzles, and another puzzle is 'unum Surrey,' priced at one shilling.

III. In Easter term, 1585, Thomas Marshe, the printer and bookseller of London, sued Richard Brett, bookseller of York, for the recovery of twelve pounds for books supplied. The list is only a short one, and only the totals of the various parcels of books are given. It consists mainly of educational works, but it is interesting to note that Brett's requirements in York were much larger than Scott's in Norwich. One work especially seems to have been in great demand in York, the 'Epitome of Erasmus's Colloquies,' of which Brett ordered one hundred copies within the six months covered by the account. Of the 'Fables of Æsop' he ordered fifty copies, and also we read of fifty Catos and twenty-five Terences. The only other titles worth noticing in this account are three copies of the 'Pageant of Popes,' six copies of 'Jhon Maundevell,' and twelve copies of the 'Destruction of Troy.'

IV. In the same year Marshe also sued one of his private customers, Edward Wingfield, Esquire of Kimbolton Castle in Huntingdonshire, for books supplied, and in this case again we get the individual prices of books, and of course the retail price. The Wingfield family was one of some importance, several of its members figuring in the history of that time. Edward Wingfield was the son of Thomas Wingfield of Kimbolton Castle, and he appears to have been a man of wide reading judging from the titles set out in this account.

Marshe, on the other hand, was somewhat loose in his description of the books. No doubt he and others thoroughly understood what was meant by 'Mr. Fenner's booke,' but at this distance of time it is impossible to say which of Dudley Fenner's books is meant, while such a title as 'Too good to be trewe,' seems to baffle identification.

With the exception of Musculus' 'Common-places,' devotional books find no place in Wingfield's order. The classics are represented by Virgill in Latine, 1s. 1d.; Virgill's four bookes in English, 6d.; Virgill's 13 bookes in English, 2s. 2d.; Ovid's Metamorphoses in English, 2s. 2d.; Tully's Offices in English and Latine, 1s.; and Homer in English, 1s.

'Morelius' dictionarye' was doubtless Bynne-man's folio edition of the 'Verborum Latinorum cum Graecis Anglicisque conjunctorum . . .' published in 1583, which Marshe priced at 18s. 6d. 'Hullote's dictionarye' was probably Marshe's own edition of Richard Huloet's 'Abcedarium Anglico-Latinum,' published in 1572, for which he charged 8s., while Barrett's was the quadruple dictionary

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of English, Latin, Greek, and French, also priced at 8s.

A feature in Wingfield's order is the number of medical works. These included 'The Method of Physike,' 5s.; Andrew Borde's 'Breviare of Helthe,' 1s. 6d.; Sir T. Challoner's 'Virtue of Niter,' 6d.; 'Approved Medicines,' which from its price, 6d., was probably an abridgment of some larger work; the 'Hospitall for the diseased,' 6d.; Andrew Borde's 'Regiment of Helthe,' 1s.; and Bullein's 'Bulwarke of defence against all Sicknes, Sornes and Woundes,' probably Marshe's edition of 1579, the retail price of which, according to this account, was five shillings and eightpence.

As already noted, much of the general literature ordered by Edward Wingfield is difficult to identify under the titles, but these may as well be recorded as they stand, for others to attempt their identification. They include 'The Mirror of Knighthode,' two parts, 4s. 8d.; 'Too good to be trewe,' 2s.; 'Conquest of the East and West,' 2s. 4d.; 'History of the sarasyns,' 1s. 8d.; Busshop's 'Blossomes,' identified as 'Beautiful Blossomes gathered by J. Byshop,' 1577, 1s. 8d.; 'Warres of the Romanes,' 3s. 8d.; 'Ordring of the comen wealthe,' 2s.; Stow's 'Chronicle' in quarto, 6s. 8d.; 'Palmering' [*sic*], 2 parts, 2s. 4d.; 'Diall of Princes,' 4s. 8d.

Then we have a number of titles which, from their prices, were clearly for chap-books, such for instance as 'Diogenes,' 6d.; 'The nyne worthies,' 6d.; 'Comfortable Letters,' 3d.; 'Tritrameron of Love,' 4d.; 'The headles beare,' 1d. (Query a ballad); 'Myrrour for citizens,' 8d.; and finally,

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what was perhaps a newsbook, 'Newes from the Turk,' 6d.

Marshe's bill amounted to £8, which Wingfield refused to pay on the ground that the books he had received from Marshe were damaged to the value of £10. The transit of books in those days was, no doubt, a difficult business. If they went by sea, there was always the liability of damage by sea-water; if by land, by rain-water, and many other causes. We know that they were packed as a rule in bales or barrels; but they came to grief very often, and the stereotyped answer in all these cases was damage. It is, however, satisfactory to find that the plaintiff in each suit won his case.

HENRY R. PLOMER.